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ABSTRACT

Concerned generally with the preparation of youth for adulthood, this symposium presentation provides a paper that discusses the need for consumer education for Malaysian youth, and also two abstracts: the first reports findings of a study of adolescents' buying practices in Malaysia, and the second is a survey of university students' attitudes toward preparing adolescents for the responsibilities of adulthood. The discussion of the need for consumer education by Evelyn Hong explores (1) problems of the education system and of youth; major issues of consumer education, including problems of consumer culture and the young, problems of development needs, problems of basic needs, the environmental crisis in Malaysia; and (2) consumer education activities related to the subject areas of the school curriculum and extracurricular activities. Also discussed are annual exhibitions by the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP), CAP workshops for student representatives from consumer clubs, research paper competitions and surveys. Concluding remarks provide a list of difficulties faced in implementing consumer education in developing countries. The first abstract describes work done by Jariah Hj Masud and Rohani Abdullah. Participating in their study of the spending patterns and buying and saving practices of Malaysian adolescents were 4,287 Form IV pupils from 32 schools in eight Malaysian states. The second abstract describes work by Hulman Sinaga. This study of Malaysian university students' attitudes regarding the preparation of adolescents for the responsibilities of adulthood concludes tentatively that Malaysian youth are not very well prepared for their future. Full papers of the abstracted studies are available through the editors of this conference. (RH)

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Symposium VI

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SYMPOSIUM VI A : Preparation of Youth for Adulthood

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Adolescents' Buying Practices in Malaysia**

Jariah Hj Masud and Rohani Abdullah

The role of young consumers in the market is important since they make up a large specialised segment of the market for many goods and influence family and peer-spending patterns. Although there is a growing interest in consumer behaviour of young people, little information is available to help us to understand their behaviour as consumers and the factors which influence their behaviour.

A study on the adolescents as consumers was conducted in 1981. Thirty-two schools from eight states (Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Melaka, Johor, Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan) were selected for the study. A total of 4,287 Form IV pupils participated in the study. The main objective of the study was to explore the spending patterns and buying and saving practices of adolescents.

The average age of the respondents in this study was 16.1 years and 62.9% of them had been brought up in the rural areas. Looking at their parents occupation, 86.9% of the respondents had fathers who worked as farmers or labourers, and 84.2% respondents had mothers who were full-time housewives. The average income of their parents was M$370.45 and there were 75.3% respondents whose fathers earned less than M$400.00 per month. In general, the majority of the respondents in this study came from low income families.

Although their parents' income was small, 92.2% respondents stated they received an allowance. The frequencies of allowance received ranged from daily to once a month. The average allowance received was M$7.47 per month. In addition to allowance, 851 respondents received the average scholarship of M$21.34 per month. The average total amount of money

received by respondents in this study was M$11.04, a sum which was relatively high when compared to the average income of their parents.

The money received was spent on several items. The respondents spent, on the average, M$9.36 on food, M$8.66 on transportation, M$7.52 on reading materials, M$5.03 on personal grooming and/or M$4.67 on entertainment. An average of M$16.40 was spent on clothing. Respondents in this study perferred to shop at supermarkets and retail outlets. The reasons given by 74.4% who did their shopping at specific places were reasonable prices and convenient locations. The majority of the respondents in this study bought food such as noodles, traditional cakes and other light snacks. In addition to buying food at the school canteen, respondents in this study also bought food from other sources such as stalls, restaurants or fast food stores.

The respondents were asked several questions on their buying practices. A total of 98% of the respondents had the opportunity to buy their own goods. The respondents planned their purchases and 51.5% of them often prepared shopping lists, 48.5% brought along the shopping lists and 29.5% of the respondents often kept to the list which they had prepared. Questions relating to other recommended consumer practices were asked. For example, respondents were asked if they observed the weight, checked their change, compared prices, checked price tags and read labels. In general, more than 50% of the respondents performed either all of these practices or at least some of them.

This paper attempts to explore factors influencing respondents buying and saving practices, and their participation in family spending. It is hoped that the result of this study will help us to understand adolescents, particularly their purchasing behaviour. The result can also be a guide to educators in developing appropriate consumer education programmes for adolescents in order to help us create a future generation of responsible consumers.

The Need for Consumer Education for Youths

Evelyn Hong

INTRODUCTION

With a few exceptions, the present education model in developing countries is still a colonial legacy. As these countries became increasingly linked to the world economic system in the post-colonial period and dependent on the developed countries, so did their education systems. Education in the developing world was geared to meet the needs of the expanding industrialised economy which became a mere appendage of the economic system in the developed West. Like the wholesale adoption of western economic and development models, the education models in the developing nations also followed suit, relying heavily on Western programmes and technology, and its bias towards higher education.

In the context of the developing world where the majority of the population is poor, this elite-oriented model leaves much to be desired as it is irrelevant to the needs of the majority. It incurs a waste of resources and makes failures of a large portion of the students. This will be elaborated in the following section. Finally and most importantly, many of the young students who become failures easily fall prey to the western, materialistic consumer culture epitomised in drug taking.

However, education in the context of the developing world has an extremely important role to play in transforming society and achieving genuine development and human liberation. For the reward of education is life itself and the purpose of education must surely be the development and fulfillment of an individual's potential. This paper seeks to explain why there is a need for consumer education as an education in life.

Probelms of the Education System and of the Young

Educationists the world over have increasingly come to the conclusion that education and the school system, especially the secondary educational system, is seriously out of step with the needs and aspirations of modern youth and of contemporary society. It has not helped young people to equip themselves with the inner strength and vision to interpret and live in a modern contemporary society. Hemming in his book, *The Betrayal of Youth*, says that the major flaw in secondary education is the academic illusion.

> The erroneous assumption that human quality is to be pre-eminently assessed in terms of intellectual ability .... By placing all the emphasis, and the prestige, on a single function of the mind, it has distorted the entire educational process. What has twisted everything askew is not a proper respect for the intellect but the comparative neglect of all other important attributes of human beings such as 'the intelligence of feeling', aesthetic awareness, imagination, intuition, judgement, breadth of apprehension, initiative, creative capacity, relational skill, manual proficiency and capability in general affairs. The enemy of education is not a genuine regard for the intellect but arrogant intellectual elitism (Hemming 1980: 17).

For those who can play this academic game well, the rewards of scholastic success are most satisfying. For those who do not, it can be a most demoralising experience generating a sense of failure and inferiority. Failure and inferiority undermines confidence and confidence is, after all, what nourishes human capability. This experience of the young is also found in our Malaysian education system. According to Gomez in his paper Education for underprivileged students' at the Consumers' Association of Penang's (CAP's) Seminar on Education and Development last year, the education system creates 'misfits' among underprivileged students, making them regard themselves more and more as failures the longer they stay in school'. This 'negative self image' was 'reinforced by years of failure, by the attitude of teachers towards him and by such measures as streaming' and 'the experience of shool' for these children is 'humiliating and ego deflating'.

As the participants at CAP's seminar last year concluded, 'ideally education should play the multiple roles of imparting knowledge, nurturing ethical values, creating sensitive and humanised individuals, and producing citizens aware of both their responsibilities and rights in a democratic society'. However, the seminar noted that 'the reality is still far removed from this ideal situation' and several disturbing trends have emerged in the present Malaysian education system. The conclusions

drawn by the participants at the close of the Seminar can be summarised as follows:

(1) The education system has not reduced inequalities in opportunities but may have in fact accentuated them. A very small percentage of poor children do well in schools compare to the far higher proportion of children from well-to-do families who succeed. Moreover, much more government educational aids are given to students from rich families than poor families.

(2) The formal school system also retains most of the characteristics of the colonial era. The main emphasis of the system remains the streaming and screening of students to sift out the 'bright' from the 'not-so-bright' and to concentrate the best teaching and material resources on the good students.

(3) These good students are then trained further to fit into the administrative, managerial and technical slots in the economic structure. Meanwhile, the students who do not do well are made to feel inferior and be failures, with the result that the education system has not benefited them much. The exam-oriented paper-chase system also produces individualistic, competitive, tense and often psychologically unhappy children and adolescents.

(4) With the stress on paper qualification and on technical knowledge, far too little place is given to the inculcation of ethical values and in creating awareness of the nature of democracy and citizen rights and responsibilities.

(5) Nor does the education system provide analysis of important societal problems or nurture in students the consciousness of their role in contributing to the welfare of the people. As a result, education cuts off students from involvement in social affairs and in the community.

(6) The end result is the creation of an elite group of students or graduates cut off from the mass of people and whose main goal is to obtain high salaries with little commitment to social affairs. There is the larger population of students who are made 'underpriviledged'.

(7) The education system has thus largely failed in the tasks of creating good citizens with socially-oriented values and motivation who understand their rights as well as their need to contribute to development.

(8) In terms of the curriculum of many subjects, there is also an unsatisfactory situation. Students in the 'science stream' the almost completely cut off from social knowledge because of the strict boundaries of their disciplines and even the ethical and philosophical issues surrounding the sciences are not dealt with in the curriculum.

(9) In the arts, humanities and social sciences, there is much more to be done to attune the curricula to the real life and often acute problems of society. For instance, environmental issues have yet to be satisfactorily incorporated in geography or the physical sciences.

(10) At the same time, disciplines such as history, economics sociology and anthropology are still based too much on concepts and curricula which are derived from the western countries. They thus fail to portray correctly the actual situation of the country. Instead the situation is explained in terms of colonial attitudes and concepts (CAP 1984: 173–5).

In fact the compartmentalisation of knowledge within the academic tradition into self-contained domains makes knowledge and learning segmented and distorted. This makes it very difficult for the young, except the very gifted, to connect what they learn into a coherent pattern. Students are not given an understanding of the inter-relationships of the things they learn. They are not able to relate it to real life situations and experiences and they merely learn for the sake of learning and passing exams. The subjects are not 'alive' or 'real' and that is why most students forget what they have learnt when the examinations are over. According to Hemming 'learning that has no roots in continuing experience soon gets forgotten' and it 'cuts off young people from understanding the interdependent nature of things, which is an essential quality of mind in the modern world' (Hemming, 1980: 21).

As we all know, adolescence is an intense period of development and discovery of one's physical growth, emotions and sexulity. It is also a period when aesthetic sensitivity sharpens, the need to acquire social skills is urgently felt and intelligence begins to develop. More important, it is also a time when the young experience the need for recognition and acceptance, the longing to achieve and to be regarded as 'having arrived'. But in our schools, where the overwhelming emphasis is on academic excellence, the experience of the non-academic majority – the low achievers – can be most painful to say the least. How else can they achieve some semblance of self-esteem except outside of school life and what better way is there than to hit back at 'respectable society'. So we are faced with the juvenile delinquents, the vandals, the hooligans, the exhibitionists, the drug addicts, and the petty thieves and criminals. These then are the unfortunate young adults, whose lives are unfulfilled and have come to naught. According to Hemming, 'it is the academic illusion that has created these angry young men many of whom have considerable untapped potentiality' (Hemming, 1980:19). Of course, one does not mean to say that the schools are *exclusively* responsible for this state of affairs. But the school system, because it does not sufficiently allow for the development of the personal abilities, interests and talents of the less

academically inclined, must accept considerable part of the responsibility as most of them do not give sufficient attention to personal development or the development of personal competence.

The sense of defeatism and helplessness is seen among our low achievers as well. In a study of an urban, male secondary school, two researchers found that the majority of our academically poorer students were indifferent to their studies. Most of the boys spent their time after school in 'a desultory manner hanging around supermarkets and shopping complexes, smoking, chit-chatting with their peers or making a nuisance of themselves' (Hui and Ling, 1982:113). According to both researches, the poor academic performance of these young boys is reflected in their poor achievement, disinterest, boredom or disruptive behaviours and frustration which usually results in acts of indiscipline.

'This is their way to tell the teachers who teach them that they want and need more attention and help because they cannot cope with the skills that are being taught' (Hui and Ling, 1982:113). For these ordinary youngsters, there is virtually no outlet or opportunity to attain confidence, acquire self awareness, face challenges or be accepted as mature and responsible adults that is within the range of *their* abilities and powers when they drop out of the meritocracy race in the school system. It is significant to note that delinquency and vandalism are growing problems in our schools and no less the fact that Malaysia has the highest heroine drug addiction rate is Asia (*The Asian Wall Street Journal*, 10 January, 1984) and most of these addicts are between the ages of 16–30.

In the absence of some means to prove their sense of worth and feel good about themselves as people and growing adults, the young turn to the shows, pop songs, magazines and comics and several other channels of the mass media. The objective of the consumer culture is to persuade the consumer to buy more products regardless of whether they are useful or safe. As a result of this consumer culture, the consumer is made to feel inferior and insecure unless he or she conforms to its norms. Young people are taught to think that the meaning of life is to be fashionable and in today's language, 'doing your thing'. That to be a man, one must smoke a cigarette, down an 'anchor', wear tight jeans, speed on a motorcycle at 90 m.p.h.. To be an attractive female, one must put on make-up, do one's hair in the latest fashion, be coy and helpness, and fashionable of course. Thus a whole new generation of people have been brought up with the main aim in life of grabbing for themselves as many things as possible. People want to possess more and better things than their neighbours or friends because this gives them a higher status and prestige. This consumer culture generates egoism, individualism and rivalry between man and man who measure each other's worth according to how big his house is, how beautiful his wife is and how smart his children are.

Given this scenario among the youth, it would be pertinent to ask at this juncture, how has the education system contributed to these negative

values? One academic has summed up her analysis of the Malaysian education system thus,

> ... the Malaysian school system basically upholds traditionalism and is achievement oriented and individualistic in approach, values which tend to reinforce symbols of materialism and status. The spirit of sacrifice, service and commitment are seldom inculcated in the young through the curriculum. Instead of co-operation, there is the sense of competition between dividuals' (Leong, 1982:156)).

In another study, on Malaysian adolescents in schools, the researchers concluded that our young people 'lack self-confidence, feel inferior, are timid and shy, sensitive, easily hurt and easily embarrassed' (Chiam and Nik Aziz, 1982:28). The study also revealed that these adolescents have difficulty in differentiating between right and wrong. 'They do not have an internal set of values that will enable them to make the appropriate judgements and decisions' (Chiam and Nik Aziz, 1982:30). More significantly, the findings indicate that contrary to popular belief, these adolescents are responsible individuals troubled about their childish behaviours, anxious about their future, and who have a great deal of idealism.

If the above findings are an indication of the kind of individuals our school system creates, it shows that school has failed in the all-round development of the personality and it has not given a large number of our young people a sense of personal competence, a feeling of humaneness and co-operation and shared responsibility to one another. Schools, it would appear, does not prepare the young for life.

The Need For Consumer Education

Despite the school system, the young, to their credit, are seeking a purpose in life. They want to be inspired, to believe and share in something that transcends themselves – ideals, values, human goodness, brotherhood, truth, justice – and they are yearning for commitment. With increasing urbanisation and the breakdown of the extended family and traditional belief systems and values, the effect on the young is most profound. There is thus a dire need for the education system to provide some alternative to fill the vacuum as it was. In this traditional belief systems and values, the consequences of these on the young are most profound. There is thus a dire need for the education system to provide some alternative, to fill the vacuum as it were. In this context, consumer education as an education for living has an important role to play. As has been mentioned many times before by consumer advocates, environmentalists, concerned citizens and politicians, the issues and problems in consumerism are issues that touch our very lives – these are not just academic or philosophical problems but also problems and

issues which affect consumers as we try to earn a living and live our everyday lives. What better place is there to start this 'education for life' than in the classroom. It is within these walls that we will find the citizens of tomorrow and it is also here that one can inculcate the values of consumer education to prepare the young for the responsibilities and issues that they will have to grapple with as citizens of tomorrow. This is the aim of consumer education and the basis of CAP's work.

MAJOR ISSUES IN CONSUMER EDUCATION

The following are some of the major issues that consumer education addresses itself to.

Problems of Consumer Culture and the Young

Historically, many of the developing nations were colonised and during this period, many of our countries were taught to look towards the 'mother country' for standards of civilisation, culture and learning. Thus the metropolitan culture was glorified and emulated while local or indigenous culture was denigrated and rejected. In this manner, colonised peoples were imbued with an inferiority complex that has continued to the present day in the form of the imported consumer culture. However, the cultural colonisation taking place today is unprecedented in human history. The mass culture transfer from the industrialised countries through the mass media and high powered advertising by trans-national corporations penetrates and permeates every strata of our society and even the most remote corner of our nation. The taste of America beckons from billboards and street corners persuading us to smoke a cigarette. On the newspaper stands in stations and terminals, a woman's magazine cajoles women into having a 'love affair' with the latest perfume. Inside the cinemas, thousands of ordinary people watch as the screen flashes bikini clad girls singing 'This is the beer! This is the life'. Every weekend in every big hotel, hundreds of young people dance to disco music while fast food joints, pinball machine centres, and bowling alleys are full of teenagers and students. This invasion of foreign images, standardised music, television programmes, dress and food 'takes over ways of thinking and ways of life'. This mass culture controls our minds and enslaves our people. We look towards the West for almost everything. Even our children have not escaped unscathed. In one survey conducted by CAP among 50 children between 5–12 years old, they were asked which country would they consider to be the best in the world and almost half of them said America. None, however, mentioned Malaysia. But the ones most susceptible to this 'Westoxication' are our vulnerable and impressionable young people.

The consumer lifestyle is further reinforced by the dominant value system in our society where careerism, financial success and hedonism

have taken the front seat and where one is motivated in life to earn more money to consume more – be it gadget, or excitement. For the young, similar pressures to compete and perform appear in schools and among parents and peer groups so that no alternative values can take root or thrive. Young people are constantly looking for standards, cults and folk heroes. In the absence of any countervailing force, the consumer culture brainwashes them to think and believe that the meaning of life is to be fashionable just like the lives of the pop stars they see on the screen. Through slavish imitation, they are sucked into the mainstream of life-long consumption. The consumer culture is an insidious force. It lulls the young from the more serious things in life and it dulls their consciousness to the crucial problems and issues of life in our society.

Problems of Development Needs

Despite almost three development decades, the developing countries have failed to take off or achieved the level of economic prosperity of the developed world. What has happened instead is the increasing disparity between the developing and developed countries in terms of its consumption and lifestyle. Today, the industrialised countries account for only 16% of the world's population but use up as much as 57% of the energy but only consume 14% of the world's energy resources. Within the developing countries, the same pattern of development is reflected in the increasing income inequalities between the rich and the poor, and where the basic needs of some two-thirds of the population have yet to be satisfied. National development in developing nations is basically mimetic of the western model and its preoccupation with high economic growth in terms of the GNP, the stress on modern technology, industrialisation, urbanised growth and a wholly imported western lifestyle. This has resulted in the misuse of scarce resources, a deteriorating environment and quality of life for the majority of the population. Some of the problems include the following.

Inflation and Shortages of Basic Necessities

In the past ten years, prices of almost all basic commodities have been increasing at incredible rates. The general price level has risen by about 100 per cent. Since 1973, the price of sugar has trebled and fish prices have increased by more than two and a half times. In Kuala Lumpur, house prices have trebled in the last five years and more than doubled in less than two years. For the past three years, price increases have continued unabated with a wide range of goods from cooking oil, beef, fish, vegetables, shoes, cloth, cars, spare parts, bus fares, electricity rates and medical fees. In recent years, the price increases are accompanied by great and prolonged shortages of essential goods, for example, beef, fish, *belacan* (a paste), charcoal, diesel, and sugar. In many cases, these shortages were not real but artificially created by unscrupulous parties in order to make excessive profits.

Inflation is a top priority issue in national development for it has repercussions on the standard of living, the food and nutritional intake and the health of the population, especially the lower-income groups. In order to tackle the problem, consumers must exert pressure on producers and middle-men whenever and wherever prices are unfairly raised. This can only be done when consumers are aware of their rights and potential influence and it can come about through consumer education.

Dangerous and Defective Products

Another factor undermining consumer interests is the increasing sales of dangerous foodstuffs, drugs, and other products which threaten the safety and health of Malaysian consumers.

Recent CAP test-findings include: dangerous levels of dyes and additives (including banned chemicals) found in very popular foodstuffs and drinks; fresh fish containing a level of human and animal faeces 11,000 times above the safety level; popular brands of drugs and cosmetics containing lethal dosages of dangerous metals such as mercury, cadmium and lead; 'coffee powder' containing only 5% of real coffee grains, and tea leaves heavily contaminated with dangerous dyes; motor vehicles found to have defective gear boxes, bursting tires and self-shattering windscreens; loaves of bread and packets of rice found to be significantly short-weight; toys with sharp edges and which are inflammable and safety hazards to children; defective electrical appliances which can cause fires and electric shocks to users. In fact, many of the dangerous and substandard products are actually products which have been banned or withdrawn from the markets in industrialized countries but are dumped in the developing countries.

Problems of Basic Needs

Food and Nutrition

Although food is the most basic of all needs, the food producing sector has stagnated or even declined. The output of fisheries, vegetables and fruits has generally stagnated, resulting in a rapid rise in food prices. About one-third of the children in Peninsular Malaysia have been found to be suffering from malnutrition. Yet an overwhelming portion of the best land is used to cultivate export crops such as rubber, oil palm and cocoa or cash crops like tobacco.

Health Care

Despite being such a vital basic need, health received only 1 per cent of the federal government development budget in 1982. Given the poor water sanitation and health services in poor communities, especially in rural areas, there should be an emphasis on public health work and preventive medicine. Unfortunately, the health system is geared towards the curative aspects of health, with its emphasis on hospital construction and medical

technology. In the Fourth Malaysia Plan, out of the $604 million allocated for health development, only $120 million is for rural health services whilst $347 million is allocated for constructing new hospitals or for hospital extensions. Again, the best medical personnel are increasingly flowing to private practice and private hospitals which only the wealthy can afford. Specialists are ironically treating the simpler 'cough-and-cold' illnesses of the rich and middle-class instead of more complex medical problems of the general population, indicating a gross under-utilisation of specialist medical services.

Water Supply

In 1970, only 48% of all houses in Malaysia were served with piped water and at least a third had no proper toilet facilities (20% had no toilet at all and used the river or bushes). This has serious health effects, as shown by the high incidence of cholera and other communicable diseases (in 1978, 62 people died from a cholera outbreak out of a total of 1,536 cases). According to Goh Kim Guan of Universiti Sains Malaysia, virtually 90% of the allocation for water supply development has been directed to improve the water supply system of urban areas like Kuala Lumpur and Penang, thus neglecting the poor rural areas which needed it the most.

Housing

There is a tremendous shortage of housing for the lower income groups, as indicated by the high incidence of squatters in towns (40% of the Kuala Lumpur and Klang Valley population are squatters). Yet in the Third Malaysia Plan, the public sector itself built 38,000 medium and high-priced houses or 44% more than the 26,000 units of low-cost houses. In the Fourth Plan, only 176,500 low-cost houses are planned for construction out of the total 400,000 units in the public sector programme. Private developers are targeted to build only 90,000 low-cost units as compared to 26,000 medium and high-priced housing. Housing is more and more a prerogative of the rich.

Public Transport

While billions of dollars are spent on the purchase of private motor cars, there has been a deterioration of public transport services on which the majority of people depend. The resources channelled for the benefit of private motorists are astronomical when we also include the costs of petrol and road construction and maintenance. Yet, bus services have not improved despite an increase in population.

Environmental Crisis

In Malaysia, the present generation is facing a series of environmental hazards. They include industrial and chemical pollution which is destroying marine life, croplands and the livelihood of fishing villagers and

farmers (in Malaysia, 50 major rivers are so polluted that no fish life can survive); the rapid chopping down of forests at the rate of 1 million acres a year, resulting in the complete depletion of timber by 1990 (deforestation has led to the silting of rivers, the flooring of towns and villages, and a reduction of water flowing to reservoirs); the rapid diminishing of fish stocks due to overfishing by trawlers and pollution of the seas and rivers (the resulting fall in fish catch is causing hardships to 70,000 fishing families and has caused a drop in protein intake of the population); and industrialisation and problems in the working environment, including industrial accidents and occupational hazards. In Malaysia, there are 50,000 recorded industrial accidents a year and workers also suffer from exposure to dangerous chemicals and gases.

The present type of industrialisation being followed has also resulted in an environmental crisis of startling proportions. Actual events show that the environment and its resources are the very basis of development. The destruction of the environment will eventually also destroy the very basis for development and indeed the chances of man's survival.

By raising environmental consciousness through consumer education, CAP hopes eventually to bring about a change in developmental priorities away from blind adherence to economic growth towards a policy of conservation and ecologically sound development.

CONSUMER EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

The scenario of the present problems is the background to CAP's concerns and activities. Through its consumer education section, CAP provides training and educational services for many groups including school, college and university students, youths, women and workers.

In the schools, consumer education is carried out through seminars, workshops and workcamps for students and teachers, school exhibitions, leadership training programmes, talks and discussions, disseminating reading materials, screening slides and filmshows in schools and consumer clubs.

Given the curriculum overload in our schools, one is fully aware that the standard curriculum offers limited leeway for integrating consumer education. However, despite the limitations, many things can be achieved and realised if the zeal and committment is there. Consumer education (the section is taken from Ooi Kim Aun *'Peranan guru dalam memajukan pendidikan pengguna'* (The role of the teacher in consumer education), CAP pamphlet) can be taught in the (1) school curriculum and (2) extra-curricular activities.

School Curriculum

General Paper/Languages

In the teaching of languages, the questions set can be related to consumer and environmental issues in which students can express themselves. Good articles for comprehension, precis writing, translation etc. can be selected. Short stories which touch on the lives of people who have become victims of consumer and environmental problems can be used to make the young aware of such problems. Pupils can be made to review a book of this nature in their essay assignments. In the general paper and English language, examination questions have been set in the past on environment and consumer issues. Teachers should encourage and stimulate the young to read more articles on these topics.

Civics

This is a subject which allows more room for the integration of consumer education. Young consumers can be told about the dangers of irresponsible marketing, poor health and a polluted environment to make them more aware as consumers of the problems and issues they face. As good and responsible citizens, they should highlight these issues and try to overcome them. They can thus be taught the approaches to these issues, for example, bringing it to the attention of the press or authorities and making joint efforts as members of the community to solve the problems.

Geography

Facts given to students here can be related to man and his community. For example, when dealing with silting, erosion, bleaching and climatic changes, these facts can also be seen as aspects of environmental destruction which is man-made. Local example can be used. This enables students not only to absorb more facts but also to be aware of the seriousness of such phenomena. Thus if the lesson is soil erosion, teachers can add that in Malaysia, much of the soil erosion has been caused by deforestation which has also led to flooding and drought as seen in Kuala Lumpur.

Two notable examples, namely, Endau Rompin and the Tembeling Dam come into focus. At the height of the public campaign to save this national park a few years ago, many school children became aware of publicity. Pupils were asking why the trees were chopped. Similarly, the Tembeling Dam issue highlighted the problems of both environmental destruction and the fate of both aboriginal people and rural communities who would have to leave their ancestral and traditional homes because of the construction of the dam. Both these incidents provided an opportunity to relate the effects of siltation, drought, floods, destruction of aquatic and animal life and the displacement of viable communities to man-made decisions.

Similarly, when teaching 'the use and misuse of resources', it is im-

portant to stress that our resources like tin, coal, oil, fisheries, forests, land etc. must be used rationally. In teaching climate or temperature, one must also bring in the fact that man today can transform his climate through pollution, deforestation and urbanisation.

Commerce

Students doing commerce are only taught topics like book-keeping, trading and how companies make business etc. The consumers' viewpoint is never stressed. More attention can be given to consumer protection and this should be taught in more detail in school. The fact that every one is a consumer from the moment he comes into the world until he leaves it must be made known to all young consumers in school. As consumers, they have undeniable rights to:

(1) complain against cheating;
(2) compensation against damage;
(3) safety and good quality;
(4) a clean environment; and
(5) consumer education.

As such, they should be made to realise that awareness must lead to action and therefore the need for collective action and the role that consumers' association can play.

For too long the 'how to make money' side of commerce has been the order of things. Teachers should also show the other side of the coin that rampant abuses like irresponsible marketing, sales gimmicks, unsafe goods and services exist in business.

Economics

The economics taught in schools talks about the factors of production, GNP, supply and demand, theory of the firm, profit maximisation, investment and savings. Economics and economic principles and concepts have been studied in terms of production. For the student, these are indeed remote and removed from reality. But surely one can reason for oneself that in any economic system, the end result of production must be consumption. This consumption has been sadly neglected in the economics we teach. Does production meet consumption needs? Are we producing necessary goods or luxury goods? Does GNP necessarily mean the quality of life? These are the crucial questions in economics.

Every student who does Keynesian economics is taught that production will increase when purchasing power increases. Have we really examine what constitutes 'purchasing power'? In times such as ours when consumers are living with inflation, how meaningful is 'purchasing power'? These mundane questions and issues should form the heart of economics education.

Home Science

Unlike what most people may believe, home science or domestic science is a very important subject in school. Unfortunately, the home science that the young are exposed to in school confines them to learning how to prepare dishes and manage a kitchen. The importance of nutrition, the dangers of junk and processed food and the changing habits in diet, for example, the consumption of fast foods in society, might have been left out.

Students should also be made aware of the cummulative aspects of pesticides in vegetables and fruits and the importance of natural foods in our diet need be stressed. In this manner, the science of home management will become more related to consumer and environmental issues which is what health, food and nutrition or home science should be all about.

Science

In the laboratories, elaborate and even intricate experiments are conducted. Much more of these can be consumer oriented. Students could learn to do simple tests of experiments, for example, test for vitamin C or DDT, the effects of monosodium glutamate, carcinogenic dyes and different forms of pollution. In so doing, consumer education becomes an enjoyable practical experience. In Biology, more attention should be given to food and nutrition, for example, the dangers of processed junk food and sweets.

Human and Social Biology, as the name implies, should stress on social and environmental health. It should teach students to understand the importance of preventive health care like sanitation, hygiene and nutrition. Students should also be made aware of the environmental effects on man and his health in the cities, home and the shop floor. By creating an awareness in these issues and problems, students will be inculcated with a sense of social responsibility to consumer and environmental issues which, very often, is missing in the laboratory experiments and scientific laws that our students are being taught.

Extra-curricular Activities

This refers to integrating consumer and environmental activities through the school societies which involves (1) schools with consumer societies and (2) schools without consumer societies. In schools without consumer societies, they should be given every encouragement to do so. However, they can still raise consumer and environmental issues in existing societies such as that of commerce, geography, co-operative, science and economics.

Discussions

Young consumers can be divided into various groups. Each group can deal with a consumer or environmental topic such as safety of goods, bus transport problem, use of pesticides and noise pollution. They can find these in the daily newspapers and in CAP's monthly magazine *Utusan Konsumer* (Consumer Message). During discussions, they should be encouraged to bring in their personal experiences from either the rural or urban areas.

Consumer Corner

Members of the society can be given a duty roster weekly to collect newspaper clippings from the major papers. They can look for news and issues related to consumers and the environment which can be displayed on notice boards. This will promote greater awareness of consumerism among the student population.

Library

The society can have a section within the library to house its books, articles, photographs etc. on consumer and environmental issues. When attractively displayed, students are likely to read these material.

Talks/Slide Shows

Talks can be held regularly. The society can invite CAP or other bodies to discuss environmental and consumer issues. People who are affected by these problems should be invited to talk about them. Slide shows and films are excellent media for heightening consumer and environmental awareness.

Exhibition

Once a year, the society can organise a small-scale exhibition on imitation goods, false labelling and dangerous foods. Charts and models may be displayed. In conjunction with this, a book exhibition can be held and sales of consumer and environmental books and the *Utusan* can also be promoted to raise the swareness of consumers.

Competitions

Consumer societies can organise a variety of competitions to encourage consumer and environmental awareness. These include quizzes, essay contests, poster competitions, debates and photography which can be held in school and at inter-school and state levels.

Surveys

Young consumers should be encouraged to find out things for themsleves. This learning through personal experience is a very effective means of education. They can carry out surveys and interview other consumers

on problems and issues such as canteen food in schools, bus services, health and sanitation in the neighbourhood, food and nutrition, reading habits of the young, advertisements in television or newspapers, interviewing consumers in the *kampung* (villages), housing estates, flats and so on. Market surveys to monitor the trend of prices of foodstuffs, goods sold in shops and packaging should also be encouraged.

Field Trips

These can be part of a learning process combined with outdoor adventure. Young consumers may wish to visit areas affected by pollution or which have consumer and environmental problems. They can talk to villagers, farmers, fishermen and urban dwellers. Photographs of these visits can be used for the compilation of booklets for publication and distribution.

ANNUAL CAP SCHOOLS' EXHIBITION

Every year, CAP organises an interschool exhibition for schools in Penang on a particular theme related to consumerism and development. Some of these have included consumer safety and testing; the environment in crisis; health, food and nutrition; appropriate technology, culture and lifestyle; economics, development and the consumer; law, justice and the consumer; and education and development.

The aim of the exhibition is to make students aware of the crucial problems and issues in the nation and to instill in them a sense of social responsibility and concern regarding these issues. Students doing a project on a particular topic are encouraged to carry out library research, interview members of the public or experts in the field. At the end of it, they have to present their findings or conclusions in the form of models, charts and other audio-visual aids. Students write a report or summary of their project and this is distributed to members of the public. During the exhibition the students are expected to explain and answer questions from the public. This aspect of communication is important as they will be evaluated on their ability to convey information and explain their project.

Working on the project and taking part in the exhibition enables students to discover for themselves more about various subject matter. They are encouraged to work as a team, handle responsibility like budgeting, co-ordinate group meetings and divide work among themselves. The project also gives them an opportunity to relate to other students. More important, it gives them a sense of purpose, shared resonsibility and lessons in inter-personal relationships.

WORKSHOPS

CAP also occasionally organises workshops for student representatives from various consumer clubs. The aim of the workcamp is to familiarise

students on consumer and environmental issues so that they can conduct similar activities in their own schools and towns. The major activities in the workcamps include:

(1) Talks and discussions on consumer-related problems like defective products, unethical marketing practices, consumer culture and ineffective consumer laws. Students are shown how to carry out surveys of these problems, complaints and act on them and organise consumer education activities in their own school, hometown or neighbourhood.
(2) Experiential learning where students are divided into groups and taken on field studies to carry out surveys of market conditions or areas affected by pollution. During these trips, they are encouraged to observe and note what they see. They also talk to the people concerned, for example, consumers who suffer from high prices or fishermen affected by marine pollution. At the end of the field trip, each group has to present their findings and views.

RESEARCH PAPER COMPETITION

These are conducted yearly for the upper secondary students on a particular theme, for instance, the hazards of smoking, the misuse of science and technology, occupational health hazards and industrial accidents and drug addiction among students. Students are given guidelines on how to carry out library research and write the paper.

SURVEYS

This comprises one of the major activities of the school societies. Students are encouraged to investigate consumer and environmental problems in their neighbourhood. For example, students are encouraged to survey their canteen food or the bus system or other topics.

From our experience, these surveys encourage the students to share and care for the day-to-day problems in the school or their neighbourhood. Because of this personal involvement, there is commitment in what they do and democracy as a value becomes alive. More than anything, it builds up their confidence and brings out their sensitivity and humaneness towards their fellowmen.

CONCLUSION

It is CAP's belief that consumer education can provide an alternation within the education system to enable young people to develop confidence and a sense of responsibility, think independently and formulate opinions as well as experience a more integrated learning process. By exposing them to real life situations, making them aware of the social and developmental

issues and problems confronting contemporary society, and getting them involved in practical activities, consumer education can help to inculcate a sense of shared responsibility.

When young people are made aware of the everyday problems of living and their rights as consumers, and are encouraged to mobilise this awareness into action within their school community or neighbourhood, they are also learning a real life lesson in democracy. More crucial in our multi-ethnic society, consumer education deals with problems and issues which touch people in our society, irrespective of their ethnicity, religion or creed. In this manner, it can be a potential force in promoting a co-operative ethos instead of competition among our young people.

At the individual level, consumer education can help to develop some human and ecological values among the young to relate meaningfully to other human beings and nature. Consumer education provides an opportunity for a real encounter with life and in the process, young people can acquire a contemporary perspective of the world and their interdependent relationships – of man and man, man and nature, man and society, and the responsibilities that go with it.

What have been listed are ideals that represent the scope of activities available within consumer education and we cannot say that the aims have already been achieved. However, in practice, we have made a start towards accomplishing these aims and we still have a long way to go.

However, it must be recognised that teachers and the education authorities have a very crucial role in spreading consumer education albeit there are difficulties faced, some of which include the following:-

(1) Consumer education in the context of the developing countries is still a very new idea. As such, teachers and educators are hampered because of the lack of concepts to convey consumer education effectively to the young.

(2) More emphasis can be given if consumer education is included as a subject in the school curriculum. This would give a more holistic approach to consumer education than merely integrating it piecemeal into various subjects. In the Malaysian context, the education authorities should set up a committee comprising educators and consumer groups actively involved in consumer education to work on the syllabus.

(3) There is a dearth of printed materials, films and models on consumer education which can be effectively used in the school. As such, relevant materials should be developed in the form of both the printed and screen media.

(4) Teachers can play a very important role and the potential is there for them to make consumer education a rewarding and happy experience for the young as well as for the teachers themselves.

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Facing Tomorrow Successfully **

Hulman Sinaga

The theme of this paper is 'Preparation for adulthood: understanding the fundamental concepts and principles for success in living, working and relating to people'. Recognising that living and working in this modern age is a complicated business, the literature was surveyed to find what kind of thinking has been done by others in helping adolescents to prepare themselves for their future.

It was found that a considerable amount of research and thinking have been done elsewhere on the matter of how a person is motivated to succeed. It has been recorded in *Psychological theories of motivation* that a number of alternative theories have been formulated to explain success motivation.

In particular, the theory of achievement motivation, as developed by the research group of David C. McClelland, has established a significant milestone in the road towards understanding the relationship between an individual's achievement motivation (as measured by the thematic apperception test (TAT), developed by Henry A. Murray to assess individual differences in the motive to enter an achievement situation) and his or her performance on selected tasks. It is interesting to note here that in 1953, McClelland and Atkinson published the book *The Achievement Motive* which documented the first year of work on the theory. Since then, several books and hundreds of articles have been written on it, both in the US and other countries such as West Germany.

These theoretical studies and conceptualisations have formed the basis for the development of programmes for the training of children, youth and adults to become successful in their chosen endeavour. For example, in the early 1960s, McClelland and his associates embarked on a

research programme designed to determine whether the motive to achieve success could be instilled in adults. Alfred Alschuler reported on some efforts to educate adolescents to attain their maximum potential. McGraw Hill published in 1975 a series of lessons for upper primary and lower secondary school levels, using various media aids that teaches a child the behavioural strategy which will enable him to achieve his own goals. In the late 1970s, Zig Ziglar and Mamie McCullough originated the *I can course: preparing today's youth for America's tomorrow*. It is intended to build solid foundation which is needed in all aspects of life. These then are some of the attempts to formulate programmes to help adolescents prepare for adulthood.

This paper provides a brief report of a preliminary study made to survey the thinking of selected university students regarding the issue of *preparing adolescents for the responsibilities of adulthood*. The survey was made among a sample of second and fourth (final) year students enrolled in the pre-service teacher education programme of the School of Educational Studies of University of Science Malaysia. They were chosen on the assumption that as products of the Malaysian educational system, they would reflect fairly accurately the kind of thinking on the above issue that had taken place in the schools. We also wanted to see the kind of differences, if any, that existed between the thinking of those exposed to only about 70 hours of education courses and those with appropximately 500 hours of exposure.

In view of the current concern of the Ministry of Education that citizens, particularly its youth, learn to develop appropriate work ethics, we wanted to find some answers to the following questions:

(1) Do they (the sample population) think that certain concepts and principles for success are useful to adolescents in order to prepare them for adulthood?
(2) If these are useful, should they be taught to students in schools as part of their formal education?
(3) What kind of help did they get in schools to acquire these principles?
(4) What concepts and principles for success do they perceive to be particularly useful to discuss?

In analysing eight local studies relating to the nature of some of the schooling experience of our adolescents and the instructional approaches as well as distancing strategies employed by their teachers, we can tentatively state that our youth are not too well prepared for their future.